

Senate Judiciary Committee

Jennifer Horgan 271-7875

HB 286, establishing a committee to study the response of law enforcement and the criminal justice system to homelessness in New Hampshire,

Hearing Date: April 15, 2021

Time Opened: 2:59 p.m.

Time Closed: 3:07 p.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Carson, Gannon, French, Whitley and Kahn

Members of the Committee Absent : None

Bill Analysis: This bill establishes a committee to study the response of law enforcement and the criminal justice system to homelessness in New Hampshire

Sponsors:

Rep. Klein-Knight

Rep. Moran

Rep. Massimilla

Rep. Griffith

Rep. Labranche

Rep. Oxaal

Rep. Bouchard

Rep. Stevens

Who supports the bill: 55 people signed up in support of the bill. Full sign in sheet available upon request.

Who opposes the bill: 0 people signed up in opposition to the bill. Full sign in sheet available upon request.

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Representative Klein Knight

- A couple months ago there was a homeless encampment surrounding some state grounds for several days in Manchester.
- Covid has exacerbated the homelessness problem in the state.
- A decision was made to remove these displaced individuals from the grounds, but there was no plan in place to house them.
- Law enforcement arrived and had a plan to protect the property, but no plan for the people.
- Witnessed State Police come to facilitate the building of a fence around the property.
- People were told ‘if the fence reaches your belongings, we are throwing them away.’

- There was no clear plan for reuniting these people with any of their belongings including things like medications, social security cards, and all their worldly possessions.
- Shared her experience of trying to help these individuals move things, while State Police stood around and laughed.
- We need a system to reunite people with things like their medication or their social security cards.
- This will facilitate a discussion about developing state protocols for when we need to protect state property, but also need to respect the dignity and humanity of those who have fallen on hard circumstances.
- NH is wasting taxpayer money housing homeless people via the incarceration process.
- Senator Carson asked if advanced warning was given to the individuals staying on the property.
 - The individuals were told they were going to have to leave. It seemed that times kept changing and that they were looking for a way to clear it out when the least amount of people were there, so they wouldn't have witnesses. How people were treated by police was very distributing.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition:

None

jch

Date Hearing Report completed: April 16, 2021